

*Nothing is politically right  
that is morally wrong.*



*Free and fair discussion  
is the firmest friend of truth.*

**MISSOURI SENATE**  
JEFFERSON CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Senate Gives First Round Approval to Ethics Bill**  
*Senate Leader Shields' Bills Includes Accountability and Transparency Measures*

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Senate today gave first round approval to Senate Bill 577, sponsored by Senate Leader Charlie Shields. The bill seeks to improve ethics standards that would allow the Missouri Ethics Commission to investigate ethics violations without an outside complaint being filed, require contributions of more than \$250 to incumbent officials and their challengers during session be electronically reported within 48 hours, and bars committees from shifting funds to all committees except candidate committees.

Shields, R-St. Joseph, said it was important for lawmakers to not get bogged down on smaller issues and instead pass a clean bill with accountability and transparency at its core.

“This ethics bill brings a new level of accountability and transparency to Missouri’s political environment,” Shields said.

The measure would give new authority to the Missouri Ethics Commission to investigate potential violations. If the commission votes unanimously to do so, the executive director can conduct an independent investigation without a complaint. The investigations would be confidential.

“This would mean that the ethics commission would finally have some flexibility and teeth to investigate things when they seem wrong, not just when a complaint is filed,” Shields added.

The measure would also require incumbent elected officials and their challengers to electronically report contributions they receive during the regular session of the General Assembly that runs from January to May. Any contributions totaling more than \$250 must be electronically reported within 48 hours during this timeframe. The same 48-hour reporting requirement would be required for any contributions more than \$250 are given to the Governor or candidates for Governor during session as well as anytime legislation is pending gubernatorial action.

“Missourians deserve to know where the money is coming from so we can avoid even the appearance of pay-to-play politics,” Shields said. “With timely reporting, plus ending the practice of legal money laundering by ending committee to committee transfers, we are creating an even greater level of transparency for Missouri voters to make informed decisions.”

The bill also ends the practice of committees transferring funds to other committees, with the exception of candidate committees. Any committee treasurer violating the ban would face civil penalties. If they break the ban three times attempting to conceal the identity of the money source, they would be permanently barred from serving as a treasurer.

The bill must receive a final vote of approval from the Senate before advancing to the House for similar consideration.

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